Herskovits & Herskovits I-4 (1929-1929) 1934
[illegible] Bush Negroes [illegible]
Saramacca

over whom it was exercised. When the ancestors of the Bush Negroes were brought to New World slavery, what measure of acquiescence they showed was due to the fact that slavery was not an unfamiliar tradition to them. They knew of the war captive, or the man convicted of a serious crime, who was a slave to one of their own kind. But the experience of the white man's slavery was a crucible in which the ownership of man by man, and the unquestioning obedience which men owed to those of higher rank, were destroyed, leaving only the ideal of the life of free men. "Free!" was the way in which one Bush Negro toasted another, or a white man, when he drank with him. A "*Man Nengre*," an adult Negro was, above all, a free man, and it was as a freeman that he was governed, for though villages had chiefs, and there were bassias who were subordinate to chiefs, and though above the village chiefs were clan chiefs, and over them all the Granman, yet the final word rested with the members of each subsidiary body, and not with its leader.

Every village had its officials, and its medium for discussions. Every clan had its head, and its old men, who, sounding out the will of the clan members, consulted with that head when questions were to be decided. For the decisions affecting the entire Saramacca River, there were the Granman and his krutu, before whom questions of larger policy or disputes between villages were brought.

Perhaps most impressive of all was the measure of autonomy which each village had. A village, or certainly a group of neighboring villages belonging to the same clan, formed a small kingdom. A Bush Negro of another village who came to visit, came as any stranger, paddle in hand, his top cloth covering his loin cloth. When he found himself in a strange village on a night when a dance was being given, he did not join the dancers until after much urging by a native of that village, and then he danced little, and if he were a particularly fine dancer, he took care not to flaunt his superior gifts. The exception to this, to be sure, were the sacred dances, when a stranger, whose god came

1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SRS Bush Negroes SRS
Saramacca

THE COUNCIL OF THE ELDERS

"Kodo!"

"Another letter has come, Bak'a. Will you read that one, too?"

This was a communication written by a lumber factor down the river. One of the villages, it seemed, was in dispute with another over timber rights. The case was laid before the Granman by the factor, who asked that the controversy be settled promptly, since the dispute was keeping the men of both villages from cutting the lumber which had been promised him.

Yankuso now spoke again: "You have heard the message, friends. The man who buys timber asks that I settle this dispute between two of our clans. Their villages are far from here. The clans of the Saramacca people can settle their own disputes."

"Gbolo!"

"So I say, friends. I can look at the cows, but from a distance I cannot tell how many there are. It is not for us here to decide this."

"*Kweti, kweti!*—No, no!"

"It is true, friends, as the Saramacca people say, 'The G'aman's breasts are for all his children.' But it is not my children who have come to me. Bak'a," he said, suddenly turning to us, "later you will write for me to this man who buys lumber. Tell him that for the sake of sweet soup a man eats sour dumplings. So I say."

The Granman looked about him. The heat of midday filled the darkness of the council house, and old Bibifo had dozed off. The gaze of the chief fixed him.

"Mati!" he said, when Bibifo stirred. "Sleep is death!"

Slowly the Granman's eyes circled the room until they came to us.

"The Bak'a has come," he repeated, with his slow intonation, every syllable clearly enunciated. "When the Bak'a came, the rain fell. From Asindopo Lantiwe we shot guns of welcome, from Abenda Konde guns were shot. In the heavens, the gods spoke them welcome. There was thunder."

2: Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramaccaner

a prisoner, and refusing to take the special train awaiting him at Kabel. Special trains, he said, were not for prisoners. He was paddled the additional ninety miles in his own corial, which took six days longer. Very vexed at this, the Governor did not shake hands with him, and Jankoeso was offended. "Why doesn't he tell me 'Howdy'?" he asked Mynheer Wolff, who is always instrumental in furthering friendly relations between Dutch and Djukas. Wolff called the Governor outside, and advised him to treat the Granman with more cordiality. The necessary handshaking was done, and the parley continued more affably. The guilty one was apprehended and jailed for a year. Once again there went upstream the annual present of the Dutch government to each Granman. This is a continuation of the custom of tribute money paid to the Bush Negroes ever since the days of the black rebellions. Every year each Granman receives 1500 guilders.

The Granman is the actual chief of the river nation, but the government centres in the village proper. The village is governed by a headman or *captain*, and aiding him in his work is a council or *bosseia*, consisting of three or four or more of the most mature men and women of the town. "Bosseia," like the American colloquial *boss*, comes from the Dutch word *baas*. Here the rough justice of the jungle is administered, and local disputes are settled. Here decisions are made concerning the ownership of timber, and property rights in cassava fields. Quarrels over women are more frequent than any other kind of disputes, and they, too, are settled by the village captain and his bosseia.

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramaccaner

622 623 352 The bosseia meet under a separate shed, specially built for this purpose. The captain has a "throne," which is an ornately carved stool. The one belonging to the captain of the village of Lombe was purchased and brought back to the American Museum of Natural History. The members of the bosseia, too, have ceremonial seats, with elaborately pierced carving, typically West African in design. When the occasion arises, a meeting is held and the council is seated about on these ceremonial benches to hold palaver.

622 623 692 [537] The business is brought up. Perhaps it is a domestic quarrel—two men over one woman. The offended party rises and begins exercising the Bush Negro's traditional privilege of unlimited and vociferous oratory. He details his wrongs. Grand gestures accompany the sonorous flow of words. The interested members of the village sit at a respectful distance from the captain and bosseia, and listen to the harangue. When other speakers have had their say, any inhabitant of the village may get up and give his or her opinion. Proudly the captain exercises his judicial talent, and the decision is handed down. It is not questioned.

622 623 562 [364] The women members of the bosseia have as much power as the men. It is chiefly the women who see that the ancestral and village customs are enforced. They are the guardians of the ancient traditions and customs of the race. To them, also, belongs the duty of keeping the village clean. If the town needs a general cleaning, the women bosseia go about from hut to hut, telling the women to get together and perform the task.

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930) 1931
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramaccaner

When there is a conflict between villages over their hunting and fishing territories, the captains and bosseias of each town meet on some neutral ground and arbitrate the matter. Then, indeed, the parley becomes wordy and rhetorical. Each cause is championed with long speeches, setting forth oratorically the rights and conditions involved. But once an agreement is arrived at, the matter is closed.

Local disputes, excluding those over women, are not nearly so common or so serious as they are among civilized white men. There is a minimum of quarrelling among the Djukas; they get along together in an almost idyllic way. Wherever there are women, there will, of course, be quarrelling, for, in the words of Confucius, "Disorder does not come from heaven, but is brought about by women." Outside of this factor there is little friction in the Bush Negro community. Their highly communalized government works exceedingly well.

The Granman and his captains have an annual council to make laws for the coming year. This and other assemblies are known as *krutu*. The captains and bosseias from surrounding villages concentrate at some important town to meet the Granman there. The Council near Gansee, the trading-post, included the villages of Nu, Lombe, Biodoti, Ganya Condree, and Adawai. Jankoeso refused to hold his parley in the town proper, although Gansee is the largest village in the entire tribe, because there is a Christian mission station there, conducted by the Moravian Brothers. Jankoeso is in favour of retaining the ancestral gods of the jungle, and does not look with favour upon the white proselytizers.

682 /8 cont./
[672] culprit is condemned to find the requital in his offspring. His
[567] children, children's children, and great-grandchildren must render slave services for the family of the person poisoned.

692 Moreover, they usually act in accordance with the judgment and the decision of their elders or council members. Most punish-
681 ments consist of whip lashes.

Chapter IV

Weapons

411 These consist of rifles, machetes, bow and arrow, and lances.
278 In some cases they also use a kind of cudgel (1). The most dangerous
682

1. An Indian weapon called apoetoe.

one that they possess, however, is an assortment of vegetable poisons with which they can secretly strike their enemies and whose effects manifest themselves slowly, but are usually lethal. They not only mix these with one food or another, or in snuff or tobacco, but in the case of some can merely bring them in contact with a part of the body and thereby produce to the most infectious results.

/9/

Chapter V

Dwellings, Practices, Customs, Housekeeping

342 Their huts are constructed low above the ground from un-
824 worked round wood, covered with pina, the leaves of a palm species (1), and surrounded by palisade pales.

1. Euterpe oleracea Mart.

352 The couches and sleeping places within are also made of paling.

354 Inside the hut is found the hearth or place for the fire, on
372 which they cook and in which they constantly maintain a fire for

/65 cont./

613 571 It seems that they expect unanimity to occur and that basically (here are found again the mental mechanisms peculiar to the Refugee Blacks), they expect it to take place by itself, to impose itself as if obvious. If nothing of the sort happens, they separate without deciding anything.

613 571 This public discussion of all important questions results, in the thought of the Refugee Blacks, not so much from a belief in the wisdom of assemblies as from fear of malevolence. If questions were debated in a small group, there would immediately be mistrustful and jealous minds who would see dark intrigues in it. The constant concern of the Refugee Blacks, when they have something important to say, is to find witnesses. That is in fact the role of the council, and it is why there is neither a lower age limit for taking part nor a precise rule governing the fashion of conducting the discussion.

613 554 The Captain or hedemã. The head of each of the great lineages which have been part of the tribe since its origin is recognized by the grand man as hedemã or "captain" (this word had been used since the original settlement of Europeans in Guiana to designate the chiefs of Indian tribes).

[692] The captains preside over the lãnti kuutu, supreme council whose functions are principally judiciary.

No precise rule of succession exists, and the choice of the members of the lineage is entirely free with regard to kinship ties. [183] When the old people are questioned about this, they usually answer that the successor must be chosen from among the classificatory "nephews" of the dead man, that is, from among the members of the lineage who are one more generation away from the foundress.

613 554 692 [642] /67 cont./

2) He exerts an extended judiciary pwer, for it is taken for granted that the legal and political power of the tribe cannot intervene in affairs between members of the same lineage, even murder, for it can be said that in the custom of the Refugee Blacks the lineage represents only one single life.

It is obligatory that the following besettled within the framework of the lineage:

[764] --Accusations of murder by sorcery where victim and supposed murderer are both members of the lineage

[423] --Arguments over lands within the zones effectively [578] possessed by the lineage.

613 554 192 877 The way in which the captain exerises his functions as judge is hard to know, because for the Refugee Blacks it is extremely shameful to reveal the dissensions within one's own lineage. And as for those of other lineages, if one succeeds in becoming acquainted with them, one scarcely dares talk about it for if that came to be known you could smart for it

613 466 554 Lineage heads have a certain authority on the material level; they designate the men charged with doig the work ordered by the administration, but truth to tell, it is above all a question of choosing from among volunteers, for it is profitable work. They might not succeed in imposing clearly upopular orders.

613 554 124 The captain designates a certain number of supervisors or basia to help him. Their /68/ role consists in watching over the cleanliness of the village, in making all the material arrangements relative to dances and burials, in calling together those concerned to the meetings of the council.

613 571 The lo constitutes a unit from the spiritual point of view, but it is important to notice that it does not involve any collective organization on the material level. In this domain the wildest individualism reigns; there are no tools for collective use, and people get together to make their clearings only if they want to.

/70 cont./

643 613 In 1957 the Dikan lineage was practically extinct. There remained only Grand Man Difu and his elder brother Samalobi, very old.

[529] The present grand man does not know the genealogy of his lineage beyond his grandmother. /Fig. 14 appears here./ /71/

[648] At the death of Awensay it was Samalobi, eldest of Awensay's classificatory nephews, who was to be named; but the French administration thought they had to oppose it, judging him too old; he yielded with good grace.

613 [165] [554] Samalobi, the ancestor, the patriarch of the Boni, died in May, 1957 at over 100 years old. Although very weakened by his infirmities and nearly blind, he kept great prestige and no important decision was made without his consent.

173 The son of Apatu, companion of Crevaux, he had retained an exact memory of the explorer whom he had accompanied during part of his trip in 1877. It is thanks to his memories that Crevaux's prestige has remained so great on the Maroni.

643 692 578 [613] [583] [564] The grand man judges without appeal disputes between members of different lineages. Truly serious affairs are extremely rare, if one keeps in mind that:

--Disputes over the payment of dowry, paying it back in case of divorce, and the assignment of the children, which form the main part of the cases argued before ordinary African jurisdictions, do not exist among the Refugee Blacks;

643 613

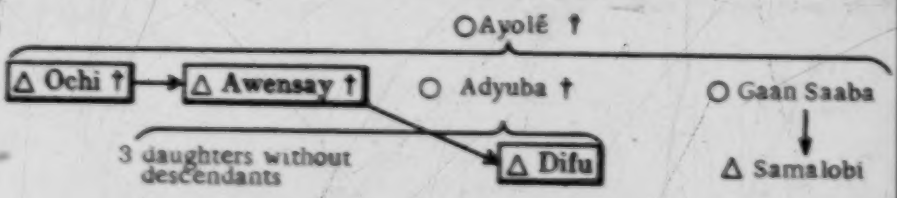

Fig. 14. Filiation of the last three grand men of the Boni.

643 692 [578] [423]

/71 cont./

--Disputes over the appropriation of lands are very rare in Boni country because of the sparseness of population.

We have never seen the grand man hold anything other than audiences of conciliation relative to people who had fought or threatened each other. [183] The custom of the Refugee Blacks would indeed be difficult to fit into a code. The state of persons and social duties derive so directly from beliefs that the intervention of a judge is not indispensable for the functioning of the society.

643 423

The grand man is supposed to retain power over all the lands of Boni country which are not allocated to lineages; in particular, this is the case with the upper basin of the headstreams of the Lawa. [648] [184] It is above all by virtue of this that he is considered the suzerain of the Indians living in this territory. The same conception exists among the Djuka with respect to the headstreams of the Tapanahoni.

643 724 [226]

The suzerainty of the grand man over the land and waters is marked, as in Africa, by special rights in the domain of hunting and fishing. He alone can authorize group fishing on the great river by the process of la nivrée. The same problem does not hold for hunting which is practiced in a strictly individual fashion. But it is taken for granted that if a tapir (1) is killed in Boni country,

1. The tapir is the largest animal of the bush.

the hunter must carry its head as well as a thigh to the grand man.

643 648

A certain misunderstanding reigns between the Europeans and the Boni on the subject of the duties of the grand man. The Europeans tend to believe that he commands the tribe in the way in which a colonel commands a regiment, that he can designate a certain man for a certain job, fix the price of boats, etc. The grand man tries to give satisfaction to the administration /72/ to justify the pay he draws, but he succeeds very badly in it, for in reality he possesses almost no temporal power.

/73 cont./

643 644 586 The present grand man, contrary to his predecessors, has only one wife. She is dressed like the other women and works at her clearing like everyone else, /74/ but her marriage to the grand man imposes special obligations on her: she can not divorce him; neither can he repudiate her.

643 829 The attitude of the Boni toward the grand man is a curious mixture of respect and disparagement. They regard him as the living symbol of their nation, and each one resents as if it were a personal insult an outsider having an incorrect attitude toward him. But their undisciplined spirit kicks up at the measures he is obliged to take to make them respect customary law, and even the authority of a poised and benevolent man like Grand Man Difu is not willingly accepted. As a matter of fact, the Boni stand for [154] [195] the authority of the grand man as they adhere to the worship of their gods, by the feeling of an absolute and inexorable necessity; in their minds the grand man is above all the priest of Odun; if the grand man were not there, they would be without defense against the wisiman, without recourse against the vengeance exercised by the yaka of the dead of other lineages.

The political power of the grand man is entirely based on these beliefs, and if they were to collapse, he would disappear [62] with them. Nobody would submit to any other law than that of the lineage, founded upon fear of the ancestors.

692 693 The lãnti kuutu. This is the assembly of the men, without distinction of age (1) or kinship; this council (lãnti = law) constitutes

> 1. There is no precise rule for fixing the age from which an adolescent may sit in this council. [561] It is apparently when he has reached full physical development and earns his living by his own efforts, about 18 to 20 years. He does not have to be married.

the legal apparatus of the Boni.

/14 cont./

692 693 [641] An essential principle of the social life of the Refugee Blacks is that every citizen carries the law within himself. If several men are requested to arbitrate a private quarrel, it is said that they form a lïnti kuutu. But they can hand down only a sentence of conciliation. Only the general assembly convoked by the grand man has the power to impose its decision.

692 795 The ordinary role of the lïnti kuutu is to judge the dead, to make sure that they were not wisimï (sorcerers), to proceed to their interrogation in order to give the force of law to the answers, especially in what concerns inheritance.

692 693 795 The lïnti kuutu meets when a death is announced; the first to arrive go to the grand man who designates two of the captains to preside over the council this time (for all the members are equal). In fact, rare are the councils attended by all the men present in the villages. Most of the time the lïnti kuutu groups only about 30 men, mostly old men.

692 The lïnti kuutu meets very rarely to judge a living man. That has happened only three times between 1948 and 1957.

692 687 In 1948 the grand man convoked the lïnti kuutu to judge a man who, duly called as boatman to take him to Saint-Laurent, had not come. He was sentenced to make a pallisade around the grand man's habitation, which took more than a month of work. /15/

692 685 In 1953 the council met to judge Loko (Dju), who had made himself guilty of aggravated theft (simulated shipwreck to the detriment of a Benzdorp trader and resale of the merchandise), for which he had been condemned by French justice to several months in prison. Loko had to make honorable amends in the presence of the assembled members of his lineage, then he was sentenced to make 50 planks for the benefit of the grand man.

[224] [643] In August, 1957, the council met to judge Pototo (Asisi-Dju), 23 years old, and Amusupé (Asisi-Aw.B.), 70 years old, who were guilty of a grave offense: misappropriation of a tapir (malpouri) killed by a Djuka who, feeling gratitude toward the grand man, had made known his intention to offer him part of the meat.

692 685 [224] /75 cont./ The Djuka had killed the tapir which had sunk. Pressed for time, he had had to leave, requesting the Asisi people to look for it.

[251] [262] The next day Pototo and Amusupé found the animal floating between two waters. They hid it in the bush and had it smoke-dried on their own behalf. They ate it with their wives (about 100 kilos of meat).

That ended up by becoming known, and a jealous man denounced them to the grand man.

Called before the Lanti kuutu, they had to apologize and were each sentenced to pay as a fine to the grand man a demijohn of 15 liters of tafia (worth about 6.000 francs) within four months.

[735] Both of them were at a loss to pay this fine, belonging to the category of ne'er-do-wells who have no regular activity and live from day to day, selling some fish or game from time to time.

[613] Amusupé appealed to Captain Konduku, head of his lineage, who agreed to pay for the tafia for him, Amusupé reimbursing him little by little.

[613] [689] As for Pototo, the head of his lineage refused categorically to help him because he had eaten the malpouri alone without allowing his family to share it (the village people would have found it normal to profit by the crime, but they deemed it immoral that one of their relatives had deprived them of meat). After three and a half months, Pototo began to occupy himself seriously at a paid job which he had the luck to find because we needed a bosman for two weeks.

577 626 [522] The Boni did nothing but laugh while telling us this story. Affairs of this kind, which do not involve any suprahuman intervention, escape in large measure their social morality; they have a certain feeling for what should be done, but submit to it only in proportion as they fear a material and immediate sanction.

/75 cont./

571 971 692 In fact, the society of the Refugee Blacks has not elaborated true political institutions; it is essentially a grouping for collective defense against suprahuman perils. The council, like the grand man, has power and authority only insofar as it remains closely bound to this function.

511 [565] [554] Absence of subordination. Among the Refugee Blacks no privileged class exists. /76/ and they all face life on a footing of rigorous equality; all receive the same education, must cultivate the soil, build their boats and houses, and live by paid work. The differences in standard of living observed from one to another stem basically from intelligence and work; and that, in spite of the belief in the possibility of getting rich by sorcery, is clearly understood by all.

565 [465] 571 461 [359] 462 [643] Although the Boni willingly engage in paid work for one another in transportation by boat, there exists no tendency toward the formation of a class of rich people and one of wage-earners. No servants exist among them, and one observes in their mutual relations no exploitation of the weak. Neither does one observe that a rich man tries to have done by another, for pay, the customary jobs he must carry out for the benefit of his wife (clearings, building of boats). This would be looked on with great disfavor. The grand man himself, if his grandson is not there to help him, goes himself to draw water from the river and he does it ostensibly, even though he has a constant concern for his prestige.

829 The misfortunes undergone by their ancestors are certainly at the base of this conception; for they have inspired in the Refugee Blacks a particular sense of human dignity which is not found to the same degree in Africa.

/161 cont./

[764] The dead person's spouse, his nearest relatives, and his children come and hang their hammocks inside the krayasu, where they will live until broko da (eighth day after the death).

[533] [535] The village people begin the tukka songs and dance, which will last part of the night, while the friends and near relatives of the dead man lament seated, head covered with a cloth.

[824] The first day after the death, as soon as it is morning, the kisimã arrive, and begin to make the coffin, using mahogany boards always kept on hand, thanks to the head of the village.

[613] The women of the dead man's lineage prepare a meal which is offered to the kisimã about 1:00 P.M. at the end of their work.

While the coffin is being made, the dead man's friends and distant relatives arrive in crowds from the neighboring villages, bringing tafia and cloth as offerings. Two kisimã lay these pieces of cloth one by one on the body saying, "So-and-so buries you."

[707] These pieces of cloth are divided up; about 15 are put into the coffin by the kisimã, part of the rest serve as pay for the kisimã, part as pay for the akpmã; another part, finally, is used for dressing the widower and his co-wives (or the widow), showing thus that during the whole mourning period they live dependent on the dead person.

Then the kisimã close the coffin without any other rites taking place. The late arrivers who bring more cloths knock the coffin saying, "I bury you," and put them down on the ground.

[692] The work of the kisimã is over; they bring the body outside the krayasu, in front of which has assembled the council called lãnti kuutu, which constitutes the judicial apparatus of the Boni.

6:Muraz--243 K-5 (1948-1954) 1961 998 Bush Negroes 508
Bont

/161 cont./

764 692 This tribunal is charged with establishing the causes of death and rendering a decision on this subject which has the force of law. But it is above all charged with judging the dead person, with determining whether he has lived worthily, whether he has the right to be buried according to the rites and to be invoked as an ancestor, or whether on the contrary he was a witch.

[43] [45] The grand man designates one or two lineage heads to preside over the council and "command" the dead person until the burial.

The grand man designates who will lead the assemblage and will "command" the dead person until the burial.

764 692 613 This cannot be the head of the dead person's lineage, for no one can at the same time be judge and judged.

Ex.: for Bénin (Dje) this was Fopo — head of the Lapé lo

for Atikati (Dje) it was Konanku — head of the Awara Baha lo

for Kondida (Aw.B.) it was Tafanié — head of the Papélinon lo

for Way (Dép. E) it was Tafanié — /162/

764 789 The 2nd and 3rd days after the death are given over to the interrogation of the dead person, which on the evening of the first day had scarcely begun.

[134] The rites of this interrogation vary from one village to another; in certain villages they begin to carry the dead man even before the construction of the coffin; the questions are not asked everywhere in the same fashion.

[171] The dead person is interrogated by methods widespread in West Africa and which are related to spiritualism: the coffin is carried on the heads of two men, feet forward. The dead man is supposed to push the bearers forward to say yes, and to make them now their heads from left to right to say no.

Gutenzeit--246 K-5 (1948-1958) 1961 499 Bush Negroes, 599 Boni

/163 cont./

764 About 5:00 P.M. the coffin arrives at the cemetery wharf and is given over to the Maroni. No other rite is carried out. It is placed at the bottom of the grave; a layer of round logs separates it from the pile of earth which is put back on top. The burial is finished about six o'clock.

Notes taken at the burial of Way in Kormotibo (January 25, 1957) (1st day after death).

I arrive in Kormotibo at nine o'clock. There are two dead people in the village: Soledo, 37 years old, who is to be buried the next day, and Way, 65, who died in Maripasoula and whose body was transported the day before.

764 When we moored, I noticed at the south end of the village 789 the bearers of Soledo's coffin, alone and immobile. Arriving 892 near the mortuary shed, I find Captain Koudoku, who presides 822 over the tlani kuutu, and Captain Poopu, head of the village. Koudoku tells me that he is in the act of proceeding to a new test on Soledo; he has just had two young men hidden, M... and G...., and the dead man is called upon to find them without hesitation.

I look around us. There is nobody nearby; a few women are attending to their occupations, indifferent to a scene observed many a time. It seems as though Koudoku is doing that for himself alone.

The coffin-bearers appear, coming from the other end of the village. Without hesitation they go toward the mortuary shed, enter it, and the end of the coffin stops before the hammock covered with a large mosquito net spread to the ground, where Way's widower, the Saramaka Gamba, is seated.

To my great surprise I see two young men go out. Nothing revealed their presence under the hammock, and Koudoku, who was talking with me, has neither said nor done anything which could direct the bearers. Nobody present could have

/166 cont./

764 767 medium of two round logs. This ritual seems to have as its purpose restricting the defilement of death for the village.).

The body is put back down in the deepest silence, with the greatest care, into the coffin. A pillow is put under the head.

[152] Those present show no emotion. The widower, the Saramaka Gamba, who has remained seated in his hammock since morning, turning his back to his wife's body, does not stir.

The kisimã bring the edges of the pieces of cloth back over the body and put on, in addition, a few camisas of the ordinary kind. Before the upper wings of the coffin are put in place, one of them gently removes the wads of cotton which had been put in the dead woman's nostrils.

Then the upper wings of the coffin are nailed down, always according to the same rite, blows struck in cadence with pieces of wood accompanying the hammer blows.

• [192] The role of the kisimã is ended; they give over the dead woman to the council, ãnti kuutu, charged with judging her.

764 787 Search for the Causes of Death. The ceremony begins about four o'clock in the greatest confusion, as is usual among the Refugee Blacks; it is impossible to understand who is really a member of the council and who is not a member, everybody talking at once.

I think I understand that the grand man has designated Captains Kondoku (Asisi-Awara Bakka) and Tafanié (Papaïston) to preside over the ceremony. In fact, it is neither the one nor the other who begins the interrogation, but a man from Papaïston village, Agodéba, a venerable old man whose torso is molded in a deplorably shoddy jersey calling to mind a rugby match.

/167 cont./

764 787 761 The bearers are changed and the interrogation continues, still as confused as before. Captain Tafanié, who arrives in the midst of all this, thinks that the dead woman does not want to speak in front of such a large crowd. He asks her to designate which of the people present will form a small group. I see the front of the coffin stop in front of an old Saramaka named Yasu, then successively in front of about ten of those present of various ages and origins. They stand up, take their little benches in their hands, and go to join Tafanié under a large tree in a spot to the side; the interrogation resumes; by nightfall a sure fact has been established: Way was killed by a god. They will resume the next day in order to find out what god is concerned and how to appease him.

764 [114] Notes taken at the funeral ceremonies for Kotoïda (Afi lineage) October 22-23, 1956 (2nd and 3rd days after death).

I arrive at Asisi on the 22nd at eight o'clock. Kotoïda died on the twentieth; the first part of the ceremony has been finished.

• [692] It is Tafanié, head of Papaïston village, who presides over the lãnti kuutu.

Tafanié himself has directed the making of the coffin (he is a kisimã) with the help of boards held in reserve on the spot. The work was finished at nine o'clock in the morning.

The body was placed in the coffin immediately, and after the presentation of the pieces of cloth, the wings were nailed. /168/

When I arrive at the wharf, the coffin is placed in the mortuary shed. The near relatives of the deceased (sons, daughters, and nephews) as well as the husband and the co-wife compelled to take part in the mourning are seated in their hammocks attached to the posts of the shed. The first-mentioned manifest no apparent sorrow whatever. Husband and

/171 cont./

764 Work is then resumed. Those present who are not dzimã, including me, are invited to throw several shovels of earth. On top of the mound are placed the papay and the objects used in the mourning, topped by the dead woman's bench. Then those present go away without haste and wash at the wharf. Several shots are again fired while the canoes go away.

The graves are spaced about 10 meters apart. The dead are not grouped by lineages; the cemetery is extended as needed, and the dead person is put in the first available spot. Thus Kotolida (Awara Bakka) is placed beside Akolida (Lapé), a hundred-year-old woman dead a few months before.

They show me the graves of village heads I have known, Diolé († in 1951), Atikati († in 1953). The mounds are already half settled down, the brush on them is as much as a meter high.

[169] One of my boatmen pours a little tafia on his mother's grave which is at the edge /172/ of the path. None of those present leaves the group to go to the grave of his relatives.

Thanking Ceremonies. On the twenty-third at eight [692] o'clock, the dinti kuutu is convened and sits at the edge of the mortuary shed.

[169] The dzimã and in a general way those who have worked on behalf of the dead person (only about ten remain, the others have left to work) are seated opposite the men of the dead woman's lineage.

It is always Tafanié who speaks. Béna (Dju), seated before the dzimã, turned toward the speaker, plays the role of respondent. Tafanié thanks all those who have worked on behalf of the dead person, detailing at length the various jobs, then citing their various lineages; he repeats the same thing in several ways and his speech is interminable. Sometimes he interrupts himself to put in a good joke or drink a bumper of tafia. A 15-liter demijohn is seen circulating inside the shed.

[193] [415]

/226 cont./

784 182 Finally, a fifth kunu is threatening to show itself. This is a remarkable affair which clarifies at the same time the legal and religious conceptions of the Refugee Blacks.

672 About 1918, a stupid accident which happened at Dagouédé (gun which went off by itself at the moment when it was being stowed in a boat) caused the death of a girl, Santonia, daughter of Kuiuba (Aw.B.1). The unwitting perpetrator of the accident was Kwau (Dip. I. Apatu village).

• [692] There were people in the Awara Bakka lineage who accused him of having done it on purpose, but the grand man judged that he was innocent and the affair was shelved.

784 614 795 787 Now in April, 1957, Kiboya (Dip. II), a young woman of 25, was attacked by a fit of possession. It was Santonia's yanka which was supposed to reveal itself in her. It declared that it was going to exercise a kunu on Dipélu. It was not claiming that Kwau had killed her on purpose and even asked the Awara Bakka not to make reprisals.

628 614 Nevertheless, full of fury, a party of Awara Bakka went the next day to attack the village of L'Enfant Perdu, demolishing a certain number of huts and pursuing the inhabitants, some of whom took refuge in the water and others in the bush. There were, however, no serious blows.

The next day they went to attack Kormotibo in the same way. It is to be noted that only after that did they think of blaming Kwau, who was then living at Wacapou. But the grand man had intervened in the meantime to re-establish peace.

In both cases the façades of several shacks were smashed and two men, Bonana and Amatodja, who had run less fast than the others, were struck symbolically.

/234 cont./

695 Fist-fighting is practiced also between individuals as a test for justification. If someone is unjustly accused of theft, this is the first idea which occurs to him, even before the oath before Odun. On this subject the Refugee Blacks have a conception analogous to that of the ancient Europeans, according to which God will come to the aid of the innocent person, giving him the strength of ten. This fighting, too, is subject to precise rules; it can be indulged in only publicly, in a village, never in the bush or on the river.

In spite of the importance attached to the oath before Odun, Boni custom does not make provision for any test for justification having a recognized legal value. This is what makes 628 613 the symbolic battle indispensable. Intervention is then asked of the head of a neutral lineage in order to restore peace. If no death or calamity takes place allowing /235/ belief in the unappeased vengeance of a dead person, the affair is very quickly forgotten. For example, in examining the table of marriages among the various lineages, one ascertains that there are a number of normal unions between the Dipélu and the Awara Bakka.

643 In these kinds of affairs the grand man has two very • 692 exact functions:

--To reveal pretense;

--To intervene as supreme arbiter in case of necessity.

[789] [995] Each time that someone is attacked by a fit of possession and claims to speak in the name of a yaka coming to exercise a kunu, the lineage head conducts him to the grand man who makes sure that there is no question of pretense.

643 995 789 695 The grand man, in the thought of the Boni, has the power to compel any yaka to manifest itself.

He conducts the person concerned to the fraga tiki and invokes the yaka. If pretense is involved, the individual will not be able to articulate a syllable. If it is true possession, the yaka will speak through his mouth.

/239 cont./

754 787 Trial for sorcery does not exist among the Boni, but a procedure exists which allows for pinning down suspicions.

After each death the dead person is asked the question: Is it wisi that killed thee? The question is put last (they first ask kunn, then fyo-fyo /see p. 398/).

If it is wisi, they ask: Is it such-and-such a family? (In general it is in the lineage itself), then the names of the lineage members are uttered successively until there is a positive response.

754 695 The one who is thus accused of wisi can be summoned to justify himself before the grand man, but that can only have the character of an investigation and not a trial. The suspected individual may not be challenged. They accept the fact that it is only a matter of presumption and that the dead accuser can lie, pursuing vengeance beyond the grave.

The Refugee Blacks declare that there is no certainty about wisi.

754 613 692 A remarkable principle of customary law is that if a member of a matrilineage /240/ is believed to have killed one of his "brothers," the judiciary power of the Boni cannot interfere. It is an affair purely within the lineage.

754 Thus no one can be challenged or expelled for an act of sorcery. If one suspects somebody strongly, one will avoid him, one will turn the cold shoulder to him, all the time remaining polite, but one will not show anything. To this principle is attached a very noble idea, that of the interdiction of vengeance. He who is victim of sorcery must under no circumstances do countersorcery. He can only ask for the protection of the abia. One must not under any circumstances ask a divinity or his ancestors to harm his aggressor.

754 715 787 Among the Refugee Blacks there is only one sanction against the wisimã: They will necessarily be found out at their death. The yaka of the dead person, interrogated by the elders,

754 /246 cont./
755 The maTtif asked 2,000 francs from him as the price of
648 his consultation.

789 Curse. Someone who judges himself victim of evil-doing has at his disposal a supreme resource: /247/ cursing his adversary, that is, appealing directly to the supreme God, Masa Gadu, to ask him to punish his adversary. This is called seni gadu -- sending God -- against someone. To do that, while asking God to kill him or make him sick, one kneels and strikes the ground with both hands in the presence of the adversary or in front of his house. This act is regarded as totally different from wisi, for one is relying on the justice of God, who judges with equity and punishes only the guilty.

However that may be, cursing is for the Refugee Blacks a very serious act. It may happen that, feeling guilty, the source of the injustice asks pardon and promises to make amends for his misdeeds. The one who uttered the curse again implores Masa Gadu in order to take back the words he spoke: "He has given me satisfaction, do nothing against him." But oftener still it happens that a complicated affair is involved, that both parties concerned are persuaded of their legitimate ground and curse each other. The case must then be carried
[692] before the grand man and straightened out at once or misfortunes
[695] may pounce upon both lineages. The grand man judges without appeal and inflicts a punishment on the one who was wrong
[778] on the main issue of the debate. Then he obliges the ad-
[782] versaries to be reconciled before the fraga tiki, where the offering of tafia and water is made.

[828] The effect of these conceptions is to render nearly im-
[754] possible hidden hatreds and rancors, which the Refugee Blacks fear very much, for they are the source of wisi.

688 In general, the act of getting angry in public and seriou-
689 sly insulting somebody is considered as an offense against moral and religious law, capable of attracting misfortunes; it is an